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STRATEGIES FOR INSTRUCTIONAL CHANGE--PROMISING IDEAS AND PERPLEXING PROBLEMS.

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SUPERVISION, BECAUSE IT COVERS A MULTIPLICITY OF TASKS PERFORMED IN NO FIXED LOCUS, ITS ALMOST IMMUNE TO SYSTEMATIC EVALUATION. ELABORATE DESCRIPTIVE STUDIES ARE NEEDED (POSSIBLY REPLICATIONS OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION STUDIES) ON SUCH TOPICS AS RESISTANCE TO CHANGE AND SUPERVISOR-SUPERVISOR RELATIONSHIPS. THEORETICAL MODELS AND CONCEPTS WHICH CAN BE BORROWED FROM THE BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES AND ADAPTED TO INSTRUCTIONAL CHANGE INCLUDE--(1) PROGRAMMING CONCEPTS FOR WORKSHOP OR LABORATORY DESIGN, (2) SIMULATION TECHNIQUES, (3) A ROGERIAN MODEL OF PSYCHOTHERAPY AND LEARNING, (4) GROUP THERAPY AND ROLE PLAYING, (5) A CONCEPTION OF SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM PROGRAMS AS SOCIAL SYSTEMS (ROLE OF CHANGE AGENTS, DIFFUSION OF INNOVATIONS, ACCULTURATION PROCESS, STUDIES OF HUMAN VALUES), AND (6) THE ECONOMIC CONCEPTION OF ORGANIZATIONAL LIFE AS A FLOW OF RESOURCES (INCLUDING HUMAN ONES). RESISTANCE OF SUPERVISION TO CHANGE IS SEEN AS RELATED TO (A) THE ABSENCE OF RECOGNIZED CHANGE AGENTS IN THE SCHOOL, (B) THE DIFFICULTY OF EFFECTING CHANGE IN PEOPLE, (C) THE BUREAUCRATIC NATURE OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION, WHICH IS GEARED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY TO MAINTENANCE, NOT CHANGE, PAPER REPRINTED FROM RATHS, JAMES AND LEEPER, ROBERT R. (EDS.), "THE SUPERVISOR--AGENT FOR CHANGE IN TEACHING," ASCD PUBLICATION, WASH., D.C. (AF)

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Strategies for Instructional Change: Promising Ideas and Perplexing Problems

Ben M. Harris

THIS paper will attempt to develop only four ideas. I think these ideas are important, although others may be more so. These ideas seem especially important to me if our concern truly is for the supervisor as an agent of change in teacher learning, and if we are concerned with research and the improved practice of supervision for instructional improvement.

My four ideas in overview can be stated as follows:

1. Research into supervisor behavior and especially as exhibited in in-service education and curriculum development is a critical need. We need more, better, new kinds, and a greater variety of research in this field of specialization.

2. Theoretical models and concepts in such fields as are available to supervisors and researchers for use in designing both research studies and supervision programs. These models or concepts can be borrowed from a variety of behavioral sciences and adapted to the specific conditions of the school operation.

3. Promising new or remodeled practices have been developed in considerable variety. These need field testing and evaluation in more systematically designed programs.

4. The development of improved supervisory program models is of critical importance. The excessive pressures for instructional change of present and future years demand more highly developed programs and strategies, in the hands of more knowledgeable supervisors, with greater resources at their disposal.

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The Need for Research

Many needs for educational research are being recognized. Supervision research seems about to be included. I aired some of my views on this point in an article for *Educational Leadership* in 1963 (10). Here I will concern myself only with a few points. Some problems of the past, the need for descriptive studies of supervisory behavior, and two other researchable areas will be mentioned.

Research Problems

It is one thing to say we need more and better research; it is quite another problem to offer guidelines for such efforts. Most readers are fully aware of the studies completed in recent years as they relate to instructional supervision. The studies directly focusing upon supervisory practice have been very few in number and largely from doctoral dissertations. A wonderful flurry of research activity has been reported in the past few years by Flanders, Hughes, Ryans and others on teacher characteristics, classroom behavior, and observation analysis. These studies have extended our knowledge of teacher behavior, raised new questions about the teaching-learning process, and sharpened some tools for research and supervision beyond the previous work of Medley and Mitzel (23) some years earlier.

Notable indeed is the lack of research on the supervisor and supervisory programs and practices in education. We continue to emphasize studies in this field which deal with teacher opinions of supervisors, principals' opinions, contrasting perception of roles, and role conflicts. These studies have been valuable, but it is time to change focus and to sharpen it too. Neither the quality nor the significance of these studies warrants much more replication.

The limited significant research directly related to supervisory behavior is especially notable when we consider research in the field of educational administration. While not extensive, this field has been much more actively concerned with research, and many studies in administration have been focused upon administrative behavior. The Ohio Leadership Studies (29), the Descriptive Characteristics Study (14a) project on the behavior of the elementary school principal, and various studies of role perceptions by Gross and others illustrate administrative research which leaves the field of research in instructional supervision in a distinctly inferior position.

It may well be that research in supervisory behavior might be

accelerated and improved substantially in the years immediately ahead by modified replications of some studies in educational administration. I do not suggest this as an ideal or exclusive approach. But the many similarities in practices and purposes of practitioners in these fields offer some promise for such research endeavors.

The recent study of administrators and the adoption of innovations by Carlson (6) might well be redesigned and repeated with supervisors as the focus. The school simulation materials developed for the Descriptive Characteristics Study project are available and might provide a relatively simple approach to the study of supervisory behavior patterns.

Further suggestions for studies building upon or adapted from other research efforts could be described. Let me hasten to add, however, that research of quite different kinds should not be neglected. Many aspects of supervisory behavior are very different from administrative behavior. These aspects need attention too!

Exploratory and Descriptive Needs

One of the serious bottlenecks to improving supervisory practices derives from a very simple array of facts. The work of supervisors is characterized by very diverse human relationships, a multiplicity of kinds of tasks, and no fixed locus of operation. The supervisor works in many organizational climates, deals extensively with subordinates, peers, and superordinates, ranges over a wide variety of substantive and procedural problems, produces no readily visible product, is held only vaguely accountable for certain on-going events in the school, and is almost immune to systematic evaluation. This is not a value judgment. It is an objective attempt to generalize in describing supervisory realities in our schools. To a lesser degree, these same things could be said of teachers and principals, but these are striking characteristics of supervisors and apply only in a limited way to the other two professional groups.

The problems offered to researchers in understanding human behavior are extremely complex at best. With respect to supervisory behavior, the problems grow and multiply because of the complexity of the job, the variety of relationships involved, and the transiency of the operation itself. This problem calls for elaborate descriptive studies which have not yet been attempted. My feeble efforts at describing supervisory staffs and responsibilities in five school districts served largely to illuminate the difficulties involved. Most studies of supervisory behavior look at the supervisor as an isolated person or the supervisor as a

homogeneous class of professionals, and both views are terribly unrealistic.

Resistance to Change

That resistance to change is a problem hardly needs elaboration. Its causes and treatments need exacting study, however, and this does justify some emphasis.

Brickell's (4) studies have highlighted the well known facts about the administrator as an obstacle to change. Carlson's (6) studies have provided new insights about administrators who do and those who do not promote change.

A whole host of unanswered questions remain in relation to this problem of resistance to change. The dynamics of the role of the principal and superintendent as stabilizers and resistors are only vaguely understood. Supervisors in central staff, state agency, intermediate unit, and federal government positions have rarely functioned as agents of change. This paradox cries for analysis. Studies by Gross, Hunter (17), Kimbrough and Seigel are among many which suggest vital relationships between community power structure and school programs.

Lazarsfeld's (20) analysis of the effects of Congressional investigations upon the social science curricula and teachers is a classic example of the need for studies of external influence on instructional practices at various levels. It would be naive, indeed, to believe that events of the past decade emphasizing changes in physical science, abstract mathematics, foreign languages, and English, while virtually ignoring applied mathematics, sociology, comparative religion, consumer economics, political science, and intercultural education were dictated by Sputnik or by chance. Economic, social and political forces operate at all levels to influence the curricula and instructional practices which supervisors can promote. The dynamic operation of these forces upon the teacher and supervisor working at local levels needs much objective study.

Supervisory Practices

Specialization of function is a growing characteristic of educational programs. Sometimes we wonder about the pupil getting lost in this process of increasing specialization. Yet certainly instructional supervision is a specialty distinct from management and teaching functions. Supervision is emerging as a true profession and increasing specialization of practices seems inevitable. Supervisors cannot continue in servant roles and expect to be effective as change agents. Considerable attention needs

to be given to supervisory practice in terms of external and internal relationships. Attention to supervisory practice has focused in the past on relations with teachers, principals and students. Few studies of supervisor-supervisor relationships exist. Similarly, comparative studies of supervisory programs employing various combinations of practices are rarely found.

Even when we look at supervisory programs of rather simple design, systematic evaluation is rarely built-in. As a result, most of what we now employ as "tools of the trade" gain their validity, if any, from crude estimates. We rely heavily upon assumption and hope to guide supervisory practices. A few basic activities have been researched by scholars in other disciplines. Rogers' (25) studies of nondirective interview techniques, studies of lectures vs. group discussions (21; 15), and a number of studies of role playing (19) and brainstorming (7) illustrate the contributions of behavioral scientists to instructional supervision.

An urgent need of this immediate period in which instructional change is demanded on all fronts is a revolution in supervisory practice. This will demand extensive field testing of a great variety of known practices to establish more clearly the unique and the common values of each. Without this, large strategies and designs for instructional change are not likely to emerge.

The use of raw power and indoctrination to secure changes in instructional practice has its advocates and recent examples of this abound (in state and national curriculum studies, for instance). There appears to be a tendency for these changes to be superficial rather than fundamental, and temporary rather than permanent. Furthermore, the abundance of undesirable side-effects derived from changes brought about under such conditions leaves much to be desired. It might be, that the so-called "new" or "modern" mathematics being introduced in elementary schools will not be desirable after all, if teachers learn to go through a sequence of "teacher-proof" procedures and to abdicate responsibility for teaching.

A number of studies do illustrate possible directions for further research and practice. DeVault's efforts to improve elementary mathematics teaching by alternate in-service education strategies demonstrated the importance of the consultant in connection with the use of mass media. A study we are now completing seems promising as a test of the effectiveness of televised demonstrations in stimulating classroom behavior change. Several studies currently under way or recently completed suggest that the video-tape recorder may become an important tool for supervision.

Theoretical Models in Application

A persistent and growing idea colors my thinking about instructional supervision and the behavior of supervisors. This is the idea that we must borrow heavily from theory and research in the various behavioral sciences in order to develop and perfect supervision as an applied science. This is hardly a new notion, for engineering, medicine and administration have trod this same path.

Supervision is a very complex field of educational endeavor and needs desperately to borrow from a variety of fields for its theoretical models. This borrowing should be selective, obviously, and will involve adapting and amalgamating. Whatever the approach, supervisory practice needs to move toward theory-based programs which might be systematically tested, providing at least some internal consistency and inferred validity to the supervisor's efforts.

Theoretical frames of reference from which supervision might borrow are numerous. The fields of learning, psychotherapy, social change, organization, communications, and human relations, are wide open to supervisors and educational researchers in the sense that theory building has been well advanced in each. Other disciplines might well offer promise, but I shall only comment briefly on some of these.

Learning Theory

Programmed learning with its underlying notion of a stimulus-response-feedback mechanism in the teaching-learning process has been carefully conceptualized and various applications are being tested and researched. Surely, there are some aspects of the in-service education of teachers which might be approached from this frame of reference. Highly programmed in-service opportunities for experience might well be developed and tested. On the other hand, basic concepts might be borrowed from programming to employ in designing workshop or laboratory type experiences for teachers.

Recent emphasis upon the process of discovery in learning has exciting implications for supervisory practice. How can we design for discovery by teachers and others? Surely, the "workshop" as originally conceived by Kelley (18) and others was heading in this direction. Like so many ideas this was cast in bronze before being fully sculptured; hence, the workshop has generally failed to be either a thing of beauty or utility.

Education specialists in government, business and industry are

borrowing heavily from learning theorists in designing training programs using reality simulation models as projections of and improvements upon the older laboratory models (30). Simulation programs have, unfortunately, come to be associated with fancy gadgetry such as the Link trainer and the paraphernalia of the astronauts. My colleagues and I have tested with promising results a number of programs using reality simulation for administrator, supervisor, and teacher in-service education (13). We have been able to limit the need for hardware and to design programs which are practical for a variety of field applications. These programs even seem to be enthusiastically received by well experienced school people who may approach anything labeled as "in-service education" with moaning, grumbling and skepticism.

Psychotherapy

Just a word about the important field of psychotherapy as it applies to designs for supervision. A most obvious fact of life is that nearly all changes in instruction involve changes in people. Many blocks to instructional innovation or even improvement seem to come from conflicting values, feelings of anxiety, and deep personal needs and drives of individuals involved. If this is so, the Rogerian model of psychotherapy and learning may well be worthy of direct application in supervisory programs.

We have examples of group therapy for supervisory purposes (1) reported in the literature, but much more extensive testing is needed. On the other hand, reports on the use of role playing for therapy, catharsis, and attitude development are to be found in a wide variety of situations, suggesting easy adaptation to supervisory practice.

Social Change

When we think of supervision practice as directed toward teacher learning, we are prone to overlook the classroom and the school as interrelated social subsystems of the larger community. Conceived as social systems, school and classroom instructional programs can be studied from the sociologist's point of view. A large body of potentially useful theory is at our disposal when we consider the models and concepts that have emerged from this discipline in recent years.

Lippitt (22) and others have offered several significant new ideas for our use regarding the role of the change agent and conditions required for his success. Rogers (26) summarizes much of what is known about the problem of diffusion of innovations, which is really a very central

problem for the practicing supervisor. From studies of the acculturation process we can now borrow and adapt models for designing supervisory programs for promoting educational change as a variety of social change.

The studies of human values as individually held and group expressed systems offer guidelines for supervisory program design. Hills' (16) study is one of many which points to the middle class values that predominate in the teaching field. There appear to be real changes in teacher values occurring and variations between and among groups are substantial. These are compelling reasons for systematic study of values as they operate in the school setting. The concept of precarious values developed by Selznick (27) is a most important one for use in developing strategies for curriculum implementation. The use of the superordinate goal mechanism described by Sherif (28) has yet to be fully tested as an approach to the promotion of instructional change.

Throughout the writings of eminent sociologists, anthropologists, social psychologists, political scientists, and behavioral scientists are fascinating concepts, models and even theories with great promise for supervisory practice. Even the field of economics has recently emerged with some useful ideas. After centuries of preoccupation with money, banking, prices, and production, some exciting applications of economics to education are being suggested by theorists who are conceptualizing organizational life as the flow of resources including human resources.

Perhaps it is sufficient to say here that a *good* theory is a most useful guide to practice. We must select, adapt and test those theories we find in other disciplines, for this is a fruitful endeavor. We need not do research in a vacuum nor try to build supervision theory from scratch.

Agents for Change

The development of instructional supervision as a field of professional endeavor geared to bring about improvements in classroom practices is more than a goal, it is an imperative need. There appears to be considerable new interest in supervisors, in-service education, and curriculum development from the viewpoint of strategies for instructional change. Hopefully, we are past that period in which advocates of one curriculum project after another come forth to save our educational system. We seem to be moving, somewhat erratically, in the direction of organizing for continuous and rapid change on a broad front.

A host of critical problems is facing the schools in developing supervisory staffs and programs for this era of educational change and in-

novation ahead. A realistic view of these problems can facilitate both developmental and research efforts. Some of these problems can be described as follows:

1. The schools do not have recognized change agents. Supervisors have not been perceived as change agents in most school systems and have rarely functioned as such. A competent, recognized change agent group needs to be developed wherever change is to be forthcoming on a planned basis.

2. Schools are so highly domesticated as social institutions that enormous resources for the cultivation of change will be required.

3. Instructional change in the school setting is inevitably a matter of change in people. This produces difficulties not equaled in situations where change is predominately technological rather than human.

4. The bureaucratic nature of school organizations and the pivotal position of administrators in the balance of power present special problems (9). The traditional role of the school as a stabilizer in our society is changing, but the administrative structure is almost exclusively geared to maintenance activities, resisting change, and avoiding controversy or conflict.

These four problem areas are sufficient challenge for the most daring of iconoclasts. The greatest challenge is in the requirement that we learn to facilitate change with much speed, steer an educationally sound course, and simultaneously preserve the heritage of free, public, local education that is unmatched for excellence anywhere in the world.

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